Planning Entry to School

A Resource Guide

2005

Ontario

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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Guide de planification de l'entrée à l'école, 2005.*

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website, at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca.

Introduction

Entry to school represents a major threshold in a child's life. It marks an important transition into the formal education system at a critical age in early child development. Whether the child has remained at home until starting school or has participated in preschool programs, planning for entry to school can support his or her long-term success. It can have a positive influence on a child's lifelong attitude towards school and on the child's development of literacy and numeracy skills.

This resource guide represents an effort to identify and build on existing effective practices and to translate evidence-based research into practical ideas and processes. This information will help school boards to work with parents and community partners as they plan students' entry to school.

The guide is designed to facilitate the planning process for children entering school in September; however, many of the suggestions could be modified to assist with the entry process at any time during the school year.

"A person has the right, without payment of fee, to attend a school in a school section, separate school zone or secondary school district, as the case may be, in which the person is qualified to be a resident pupil." [Education Act S32 (1)]

All Ontario children have a right to an English-language education. Parents with rights under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are also guaranteed the right to a French-language education for their children.

Why Develop a Resource Guide for Planning Entry to School?

When children arrive at school, they come with different backgrounds and experiences and at different stages of development. Young children begin to develop their skills, knowledge, and attitudes in a variety of environments – in their homes, in child care, and in community settings. Children bring different cultural experiences, first languages, and family customs to the school setting. Some children may be recent immigrants with little or no knowledge of the English language. Others may be entering French-language schools with a limited ability to speak French. In some cases, parents' own memories of school may cause apprehension about sending their child to school.

Studies show that familiarity with the expectations of the school setting helps children adjust more easily to school and reduces anxiety about starting school for both parents and children. Entry-to-school planning that includes parents in the process ensures such familiarity by building bridges between the home and the education system.

For children with special needs, entry to school is more complex and requires careful planning and coordination. An entry-to-school plan should provide adequate time for children and parents to learn and practise the skills and routines that will facilitate a smooth move from preschool to school.

The goal of planning for entry to school is to help children adjust quickly to the school setting, enjoy learning, and develop a positive attitude towards education. A good start to school improves a child's chances of success from school entry to graduation.

"Starting school is not just an experience for the individual child – it is a significant 'family milestone' for parents and other family members, as well as children. School entry has a major impact on family routines and relationships." (Rosenkoetter and Rosenkoetter, 1993, p. 13)

Who Is the Intended Audience of This Resource Guide?

This resource guide is intended as a resource for school boards to use with their professional staff, parents,* and community partners. It will enable boards to:

- explore different ways to facilitate successful entry to school for all children, including children with special needs; and
- enhance their own entry-to-school process.

The general rule under the Education Act is that *all children* must attend school from the age of six. [See S21(1)a and b.] (Certain exceptions to the rule are specified in the act.)

The Education Act also indicates that any child who is "otherwise qualified" (see S33 of the act) may become a resident pupil of a school at the age of four, to attend Junior Kindergarten (where offered), or at the age of five, to attend Kindergarten. [See S34(1) and (2).]

These requirements and rights apply to all children, including children with special education needs.

The planning of entry to school may involve many partners. The school should work closely with parents to arrange for a smooth beginning to the school year for their child. Parents will require a great deal of information from the school about how to acquaint their child with school routines and build the skills that will permit a smooth entry. Parents may also be receiving support from other community resources – including preschool service providers, health care providers, social services, or community organizations – that may play a significant role in the entry process. At the school level, planning may involve a school board's consultant or coordinator, the school principal, teachers, and other education professionals.

* Throughout this guide, the word *parents* is used to refer to both parent(s) and guardian(s).

How the Resource Guide Was Developed

Under Policy/Program Memorandum No. 11, the Consortium régional de l'Est de l'Ontario has developed an early-screening tool that includes a teacher's guide; forms for interviews and data collection; formal and informal case studies; forms for creating class profiles and individual student profiles (for students with special needs); and transition forms that accompany students from one grade to the next, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3.

This guide was developed from research into entry-to-school planning in Ontario and a variety of other jurisdictions. This research involved:

1. **a review of current research and literature.** A wide range of current, evidence-based literature on entry-to-school practices in Ontario, other provinces, the United States, Europe, and Australia was examined. Key points from this research are summarized in Appendix C;
2. **a review of existing practices in Ontario school boards.** Ontario school boards have considerable experience in planning and implementing effective entry-to-school processes for all children, including children with special needs. This resource guide draws and builds upon that expertise.

How to Use the Resource Guide

This resource guide is intended to assist school boards as they review the processes that they may already have in place to plan for the entry of children to the school setting. Policy/Program Memorandum No. 11: Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs requires school boards to develop procedures for the early identification of learning needs for students already attending school. The resource guide will complement these procedures, as well as those emerging from the Best Start initiative of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS).

The appendices provide a range of information that school boards may find helpful in developing their entry-to-school plans. Appendix A provides quick and easy access to a number of effective school board practices, protocols, links, ideas, and templates for many of the key elements in the planning process. Appendix B outlines the current environment in Ontario as it relates to children entering school, and Appendix C summarizes key research findings from the interjurisdictional literature review. This research provides the rationale and context for the guidelines and best practices presented in the guide.

Finally, the guide also includes a short reference list of selected books, articles, and websites to assist those interested in conducting further research into particular aspects of entry-to-school planning and implementation.

Principles Guiding the Planning Process

Research has identified five guiding principles that are critical to the success of the entry-to-school planning process.

1. A Focus on the Whole Child and the Family

The strengths and needs of the individual child are the focus of an effective entry-to-school plan. Preschool programs and services emphasize the positive development of the whole child – socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually. In planning for the child's entry to school, schools and school boards continue this emphasis. As well, they need to consider the child in the context of his or her family in order to work constructively with family members.

"It is essential to keep the needs of the child uppermost. Effective entry-to-school programs focus on relationships." (Dockett and Perry, 2001, p. 36)

A key ingredient of collaboration is trust, which evolves out of repeated successful interactions in which honesty, openness, and respect prevail. (Adapted from Briggs, 1997)

2. Collaboration

Successful entry-to-school planning involves sharing information and coordinating resources among the key players, including:

- the family;
- providers of preschool programs and services; and
- school-board staff.

Entry-to-school planning needs to be sensitive to the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of families, children, and the community, as well as to standards and outcome measures set by government at the community level. (Adapted from McCain and Mustard, 1999)

3. Sensitivity to Diversity

Effective planning is sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity and respects the dignity of all individuals. The planning process respects the cultural heritage and needs of Aboriginal members of the community, as well as those of new Canadians. It also seeks to ensure real equality of opportunity for all children through proactive steps to foster a barrier-free environment.

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Researchers stress the importance of both defined procedures and personal relationships in effective entry to schools. They all consider components related to interagency collaboration and written agreements to be important, as well as family participation, preparation of the child and family for the new program, and preparation of the program. (Adapted from Rosenkoetter, Whaley, Hains, and Pierce, 2001)

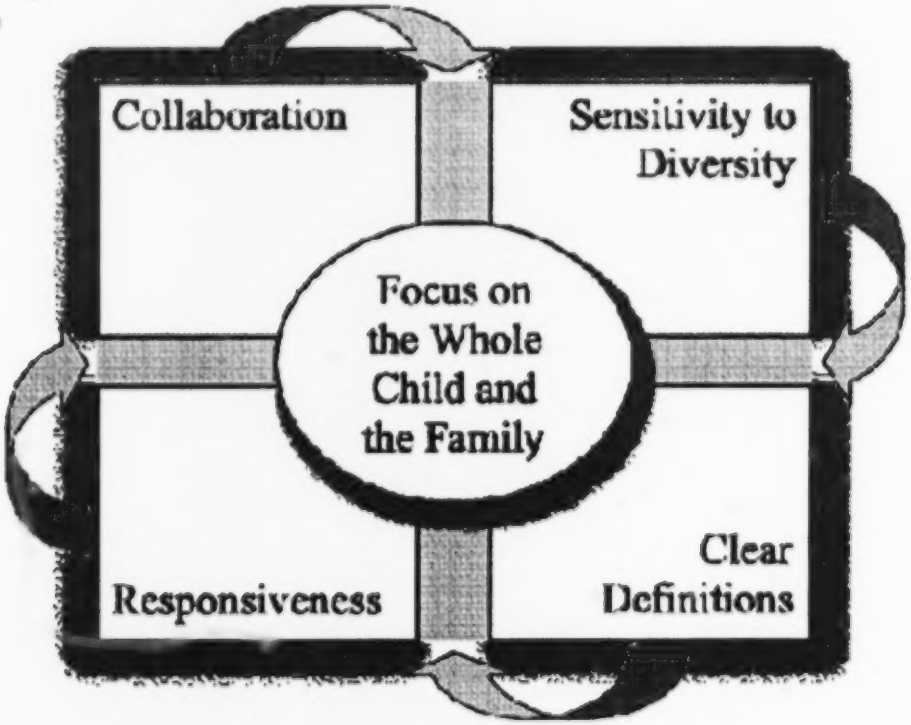
Plans need to be flexible and responsive to changes in the child's needs, family, community, or resources. (Adapted from Dockett and Perry, 2001)

4. Clear Definitions

Entry-to-school planning has clearly defined procedures, roles, responsibilities, and timelines for all partners in the transition process: educators, parents, school boards, and community members. Each has a distinctive role in ensuring that transition planning prepares children to succeed in school. Effective protocols for entry to school clearly delineate roles and responsibilities in language and terms that are familiar to all parties.

5. Responsiveness

Effective entry-to-school planning provides mechanisms that allow schools to respond to changes in the child's needs, family, community, or resources. Programs and services offer a comprehensive range of supports in a coordinated and integrated manner to respond holistically to the unique and varied needs of each child.



Effective Planning for All Children

Some school boards provide a process for their schools to follow. Even so, much of the planning for school entry takes place at the school level. Listed below are strategies identified by school principals that can assist children to have a smooth entry to school – usually at Junior Kindergarten. The list is not exhaustive, nor are all of the strategies used in all schools.

1. **Arranging for early registration – nine to twelve months before the start of school in September.** Early registration allows the principal to meet the parents and child and to determine if there are special needs or issues (e.g., health) that need to be addressed. It also allows parents to develop a positive rapport with the school, discuss any concerns or apprehensions they may have, and inform the school about the needs of their child. The Notice for Registration explains what documentation the parents will be required to provide to the school (e.g., birth registration or birth certificate for proof of age; immunization records).

Appendix A.1, "Let's Learn: Kindergarten Registration", is a sample parent information brochure developed by the Bluewater District School Board, the Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board, and community agencies. It outlines the various steps for parents, beginning one year before entry to school.

Appendix A.2, "All About Me", is an introduction package, developed by the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board, for parents to complete with their child before the child's entry to Kindergarten.

2. **Holding a parent information meeting in early spring.** The parent information meeting is a good opportunity for the school staff to walk parents through a typical day, explain school programs, and help parents to understand what skills and knowledge their child will need to make the entry successful. In some circumstances, the meeting is also an opportunity to make parents aware of various non-school services (e.g., child-care services, community supports, Public Health services, parenting courses available in the community). In addition, it may be an appropriate time to explain school procedures and policies (e.g., procedures related to inclement weather, safe arrival, transportation, snacks, recess; policies on parent volunteers, assessment, report cards, parent-teacher interviews). There is a risk that parents may feel overwhelmed by information, so meetings should be carefully designed to build their confidence.

Appendix A.3 lists the topics covered at a spring information meeting for parents of incoming Kindergarten children at Holy Family Separate School in Alliston.

In school communities where several languages are spoken and diverse cultures are represented, Kindergarten information is made available in different languages. For example, the document "Getting Ready for Kindergarten" (Appendix A.4) is available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu, and Vietnamese. This document is available from the Toronto District School Board, and is posted on the board's website. The Toronto District School Board also posts a series of "Frequently Asked Questions" for parents. For both items, go to http://www.tdsb.on.ca and click on the "Parents" tab, then select "Kindergarten".

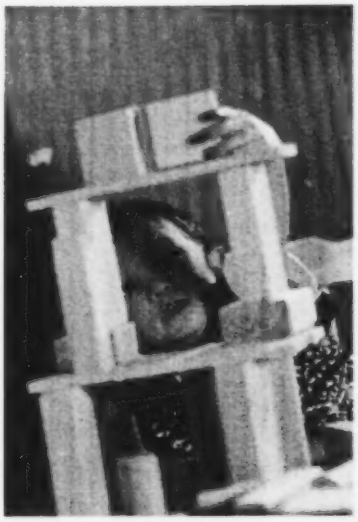
3. **Scheduling school and classroom visits for the parents and child before the start of school in September.** This may be done in a number of ways:

   - The child and parent visit during a regular day in the spring to see the class in action.
   - The child and parent have an appointment at the end of summer or in early September to meet with the teacher in the classroom before the start of school.
   - The school arranges for staggered entry to school. Children come in small groups and build up to the full class numbers.

Appendix A.5 describes the philosophy and practices of the Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program, developed to give three-year-olds and their parents opportunities to make four visits to their neighbourhood school before they enter Junior Kindergarten.

4. **Personalizing correspondence sent to parents about the September entry.** Printed information about the school (e.g., schedule for alternate-day attendance, staggered-entry schedule, what to bring on the first day, information about snacks) can be addressed *to the child* in care of the parents and presented in a personalized, informal manner. It is recommended that all interaction from the school be personalized and designed to develop a cooperative relationship between the school and the parents. Often, parents are apprehensive about their child, especially a first child, starting school. By using a friendly, reassuring format to present information, schools can set the stage for a positive relationship with both the parents and the child.

Appendix A.6 is a sample of a personalized note sent to a four-year-old child two weeks before entry to Junior Kindergarten at St. Matthew School in Waterloo. The child's family also received a booklet, *Entering Elementary School: An Information Guide for Parents and Students*, which can be viewed at and/or downloaded from http://www.wcdsb.edu.on.ca/schools/entering-elem/wel.html.



5. **Developing strategies to address the language and cultural needs of the community.** These could include:

   - school information and registration forms translated into the languages of the community (see Appendix A.3);
   - interpreters to talk with parents.

   As well, principals could identify staff who are proficient in the first languages of the community. Principals should also take steps to ensure staff awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences.

6. **Arranging with the transportation department for a school bus orientation session for children and their parents.** This could include instruction in getting on and off the bus safely and crossing the road with the safety patroller, as well as a short ride.

7. **Preparing and distributing a welcome package to all new students on their first school day in September.** The package could include items for home use, such as a welcome letter signed by the director of education, books for the parent to read to the child, scissors, glue, construction paper, and a scrapbook.

Appendix A.7 is a sample letter signed by the Director of Education for the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board. The director's letter accompanies a "Welcome to School" tote bag that is given to each child entering Kindergarten. The letter lists the items contained in the tote bag. The Learning Partnership has begun a Welcome to Kindergarten initiative that also involves providing families with a "Kindergarten Welcome Bag". The Welcome Bag contains early learning resources that help parents prepare their children for school and learning. For details, go to http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/, and click on "Programs".

Effective Planning for Children With Special Needs

Research shows that effective entry-to-school planning for children with special needs occurs both at the community level and at the level of the individual child.

Planning at the Community Level

School boards need to work with community partners to develop procedures that will ensure a smooth school-entry process for children with special education needs. The actions school boards can take include, but are not limited to, the following:

- establishing and maintaining links with community partners
- encouraging parental involvement
- encouraging early notification
- developing a detailed protocol
- reviewing the entry-to-school process

The following sections provide details about each of these actions.

Establishing and Maintaining Links with Community Partners

- School boards identify and establish links with community agencies that provide services to preschool children and their families.
- Collaboration between school boards and community partners is initiated and supported at the senior levels of all participating organizations.
- All individuals involved with the entry-to-school process make a commitment to work together.
- Schools, school councils, and community agencies have regular, ongoing communication on a formal or informal basis.

"For all children ... partners include parents or guardians, caregivers, resource teachers, teacher assistants, other school personnel, and possibly representatives from daycare or preschool services in the community. For children with special needs, partners may also include district staff and representatives and professionals from health and social service agencies." (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2003)

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards can:

- create and maintain a network of contacts with community agencies, organizations, and professionals who provide services to preschool children. A "system directory" listing the names, titles, and contact information of members of the network could be developed and kept up to date by school staff and made widely available to them;
- make presentations to community service providers outlining the school-entry planning process and identifying where their input is most vital;
- invite community agencies to set up displays, distribute literature, or make presentations at parent information evenings or school registration clinics. In addition, planning meetings with coterminous boards can lead to joint initiatives and shared understanding of the mandates of participating agencies;
- monitor new initiatives in health and social services and, as appropriate, work with these ministries, and with local agencies, to develop a protocol for helping the parents and their child gain access to relevant services;
- provide recognition for agencies that interact with schools by holding an "appreciation lunch" or a "community partner day".

The Grey Bruce Children's Alliance (see Appendix A.8) works to coordinate a variety of services for children, including the "Let's Learn Clinics", through which numerous local agencies and support services collaborate in school-entry planning.

Appendix A.9 (a letter directed to the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch) outlines the process used in the city of Hamilton for helping children with special needs make the transition into school. It demonstrates an effective collaborative partnership between coterminous school boards and community agencies.

Encouraging Parental Involvement

- School board staff invite parents to participate in the entry-to-school planning process and establish systems to allow their meaningful involvement throughout the process.
- School boards host parent information nights.
- School boards set up procedures for ensuring that parents have access to the information they require.

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards and/or schools can:

- host parent information evenings and hold early registration clinics. These events should be advertised in as broad a range of media as possible: community newspapers; local radio; newsletters of community organizations; the school board website; the principal's newsletter to parents and students; information boards at shopping malls, local supermarkets, and libraries;
- provide parents with barrier-free access to information meetings and information packages;
- translate school information into languages that are spoken in the community and provide interpreters, as required, at parent information nights and school registration clinics (see Appendix A.3);
- provide an information package answering frequently asked questions about school procedures and policies (e.g., alternate-day attendance and staggered-entry schedules; procedures related to safe arrival, transportation, inclement weather, snacks and lunch, recess, washroom breaks; policies related to parent volunteers, curriculum and assessment, report cards, parent-teacher interviews);
- provide parents with information on stages of early child development, expectations for learning ability, and tips on how to prepare their child for school. This may include information about thematic learning activities and age-appropriate vocabulary;

"Teachers, early childhood educators, members of the community, and families must work together to provide constructive and consistent learning experiences that will build students' confidence, encourage them to continue to see learning as both enjoyable and useful, and provide a strong foundation for their future intellectual, physical, and social development." (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998)

"A 'readiness to learn' measure (that covers development in physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language, general knowledge and cognitive skills) should be done at entry to school." (McCain and Mustard, 1999, p. 9)

- ask parents to complete a developmental screening questionnaire that will help them to understand their child's stage of development;

The Nipissing District Developmental Screen is used by many of the "Healthy Babies Healthy Children" programs throughout the province (available online at http://www.ndds.ca/). The screen explores a child's skills in the following areas: vision, hearing, speech, language, communication, gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, social/emotional, and self-help. The developmental screen is available in French, Spanish, and Chinese; translation into Vietnamese is under way. Age-appropriate activities to promote overall development accompany the screen. See Appendix A.10 for a description of the "Healthy Babies Healthy Children" program.

- encourage parents of a child with special needs to prepare a portfolio that includes current assessments, samples of the child's work, preschool reports, and a description of strategies used at home;

Appendix A.11 is a sample information kit for parents prepared by the École publique Héritage, Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario. It contains details about many school programs and procedures, including specific information related to allergies and medications.

- make parents of a child with special needs aware that members of the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) may be able to provide information about programs and services related to specific areas of exceptionality, such as school board or Provincial School programs for children who are deaf, blind, or deaf/blind. Additional information is available at http://www.seaclearning.ca.

Red Flags Early Identification Reference Guide for Infant, Toddler and Preschool Children (Red Flags) is a quick reference guide for early years professionals. It can be used in conjunction with a validated screening tool, such as the Nipissing District Developmental Screens or the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Red Flags outlines a range of functional indicators or domains commonly used to monitor healthy child development, as well as potential problem areas for child development. It is intended to assist in the determination of when and where to refer for additional advice, formal assessment, and/or treatment.

The Red Flags guide was produced by the York Region Early Identification Planning Coalition. To view this document, go to http://www.region.york.on.ca.

Encouraging Early Notification

- School boards encourage community partners and parents to notify the board well in advance of a child's entry to school.
- Nine to twelve months before a child enters school, a community agency or the parent notifies the school board about the child, including information about any specific needs. This allows the school board and school to begin the planning process.
- School boards provide registration opportunities at the beginning of the planning process.

Nine-months' to twelve-months' lead time is recommended for all, to help school boards assess the resources needed, such as equipment, staff, and training, and to help parents prepare their children for entry to school.

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards and/or schools can:

- encourage agencies and preschool service providers to notify, with parental consent, the board-level special education coordinator or the school principal early in the fall about children with special needs who will be entering school the following September;
- prepare a handout for preschool service providers outlining the process and timelines for entry to school;
- conduct registration clinics in the schools as early as October or November of the year preceding the child's entry;
- advertise registration clinics on the radio; in newspapers; in school newsletters; on the school board's website; at shopping malls, local supermarkets, and libraries; through handouts distributed by preschool service providers; and through notices to community groups and Children's Rehabilitation Centres. If possible, provide information in the languages spoken in the community.

Developing a Detailed Protocol

"An inter-agency committee to review and develop policies and procedures can benefit planning." (Rous, Hemmeter, and Schuster, 1994, p. 381)

- School boards work with community agencies to develop a written protocol for the school-entry process, with timelines, outlining the roles and responsibilities of parents and the various organizations.
- School boards share the protocol with staff of the board and the various community agencies.

Appendix A.12, "Steps to School", is a brochure developed jointly by the Simcoe County District School Board, the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, and the Simcoe County Early Intervention System. The brochure outlines the transition process and offers tips for parents at each step of the process.

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards can:

- develop formal agreements with community service providers outlining the roles and responsibilities of school board staff and the various service providers;
- develop a protocol for entry-to-school planning, listing all the agencies and school boards participating in the protocol and addressing the following elements:
  - the time period covered by the agreement;
  - a statement of purpose for the agreement;
  - roles and responsibilities of the agencies and school boards that sign the agreement;
  - definitions of key terminology used in the protocol;
  - descriptions of the procedures for:
    - informing and supporting families through the transition;
    - gathering and sharing information and assessment results;
    - obtaining parental consent for the release of information to other agencies;

- time lines and responsibilities for:
  - determining eligibility for services;
  - providing services in both official languages, as needed;
  - writing the entry-to-school plan;
  - acquiring needed adaptive equipment or assistive technology;
  - providing training to staff on matters relating to special needs (e.g., use of adaptive equipment);
  - monitoring implementation of the plan.

Appendix A.13 is a sample entry plan for Kindergarten students with special needs used by the Rainbow District School Board.

Reviewing the Entry-to-School Process

- School boards or entry-to-school planning teams initiate regular evaluations of the entry-to-school process at the district or the local level to identify effective practices and assist in improving the process as needed.
- School boards (including their Special Education Advisory Committees) and community agencies formally review the entry-to-school protocol, as part of the school board's Special Education Plan, and make changes to the protocol, as required.
- School boards conduct informal reviews, as required.

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards can:

- invite community partners to provide ongoing input to the process. For example, following each registration clinic, school board staff can ask the parents and community partners for feedback;
- report back on the results of any process reviews so partners understand that their input has been heard and valued;
- conduct a formal review of the entry-to-school protocols, and make changes to the protocols as required.

Planning at the Level of the Individual Child

It is important for school boards and schools to ensure that each child is adequately prepared for and supported during the school-entry process. Actions that boards and/or schools can take include, but are not limited to, the following:

- appointing a lead person
- holding a case conference
- gathering information
- providing orientation opportunities
- providing training for school staff
- reviewing the entry-to-school process

The following sections provide details about each of these actions.

Appointing a Lead Person

A lead person (called a "navigator" in some school boards) may be appointed by the school board to coordinate entry-to-school planning and implementation. It is this lead person who initiates communication with the parents.

In most cases, parents coordinate their child's entry to school. For children with special needs, however, because of the number of different service providers who could be involved, a designated coordinator may be necessary. In Saskatchewan, for example, the nature of the child's needs and established relationships determines whether a lead person is appointed.

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards can:

- designate an individual to be responsible for coordinating the entry-to-school planning for each child with special needs. This lead person may be the school board special education coordinator, the school principal, the special education resource teacher, the classroom teacher, or a community service provider.

Appendix A.14, "The Welcome Checklist for Elementary Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders", sets out the steps a "lead person" might follow to prepare all parties for the entry to school of a child with special needs.

Holding a Case Conference

- The lead person initiates a case conference involving community agency staff, the classroom teacher, the school principal, special education staff, and the parents.
- During the case conference, participants:
  - share copies of relevant assessment results and other helpful information from the child's preschool file for the school's records (with parental consent);
  - identify the strengths and needs of the child;
  - develop a written plan for preparing the child to make a smooth entry to school.

"A formal inter-agency committee may review the needs of the child and assess what resources are needed to facilitate entry-to-school planning." (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2002)

Examples of Effective Practice

The lead person:

- chairs a planning case conference. Attendees might include:
  - the special education resource teacher;
  - the classroom teacher;
  - the parents;
  - the school board special education consultant;
  - preschool service providers;
- uses the minutes of the meeting as the basis for writing a detailed, individual, entry-to-school plan specifying roles, responsibilities, goals, action steps, and timelines;
- arranges for the recording of minutes;
- uses the plan developed in the case conference as the starting point for the initial Individual Education Plan (IEP) once the child enters school.

Gathering Information

- School staff visit the preschool setting to observe both the child and the strategies being used with the child by service providers.

Examples of Effective Practice

School staff can:

- provide templates and tools (such as questionnaires, developmental checklists, record-keeping organizers) to assist community partners and parents in providing information about the child. This may include information about special needs and required accommodations, as well as successful strategies used to date;

- ask parents and/or preschool service providers to complete a "preschool screening booklet" or other questionnaire that might include scales for development of social, speech and language, fine, and gross motor skills by age, along with family information, environmental considerations, current abilities, and family concerns;

For an example of a preschool screening tool, "Fair Start Preschool Screening Approach", go to http://www.fairstart.ca. The "Fair Start" screening is used by the Lakehead District School Board, the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, and the Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales as a part of Junior Kindergarten registration for schools in Thunder Bay. Appendix A.15 provides a description of this screening tool.

- at an information night or registration clinic, demonstrate for parents how to prepare a portfolio for a child with special needs, including current assessments, samples of work, preschool reports, and a description of strategies used at home;
- encourage preschool service providers to complete a detailed exit report on each child with special needs leaving their service (with parental permission);

See Appendix A.16 for a protocol to assist parents in registering children with specific learning needs. (This sample protocol was developed jointly by the Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Grandes Rivières, community agencies, and Centre Jules-Léger.)

- coordinate with local health agencies to ensure early screening of children to identify needs related to hearing, speech, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and learning ability;
- host a networking opportunity to enable members of the child's preschool to meet with school board and/or school staff members to review the information package on the child and share insights and strategies;
- facilitate visits by the classroom teacher and/or special education resource teacher to observe the child in his or her preschool setting.

An "Early Years Transition Planning Inventory" is provided in the Government of Manitoba's guidelines for planning entry to school for children with special needs. The inventory is completed by parents or preschool agencies and includes a variety of forms for recording information and authorizing the disclosure of information about the child to the school board. The inventory can be downloaded from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/specedu/protocol/pdf/early_childhood.pdf. (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2002)

The collection, use, and disclosure of personal information about students is governed by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which applies to school boards. In addition, the Education Act and the *Ontario Student Record (OSR) Guideline, 2000* govern the creation of and access to the Ontario Student Record (OSR). The Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (Bill 31) does not generally apply to school boards, although it may cover some of the professionals who work at the school board, whether or not they are school board employees. When sharing information about students with community agencies, preschool service providers, and others, and among staff members, school boards should be cognizant of the rules imposed by these acts.

"Children with special needs are at risk of being uninvolved in decision making, uninvolved in their community life and generally unable to lead fulfilling lives" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2003).

Providing Orientation Opportunities

- Some schools' plans identify opportunities for children and parents to visit the school prior to school entry, to meet staff and practise routines.

Examples of Effective Practice

Before school starts, school staff can:

- arrange visits to the school and classroom for the child and parents, perhaps in conjunction with a special event at the school. Some children with special needs may benefit from a series of visits to familiarize themselves with the new environment and practise new routines;
- familiarize children with their transportation to and from school;
- address correspondence about school entry to the child, in care of the parents;
- for children with special needs, prepare a "social story book" that the parents can review with the child prior to school entry. This could include photos of the school, classroom, teacher, playground, washroom, and so on. If appropriate, a video or audiotape might be supplied for children with special needs;

Appendix A.17 is a description, with samples, of a "social story book" developed to assist children with special needs entering school.

- arrange for staggered entry, so that children can begin attending school in small groups before the class is at full size. For example, a class of twenty Junior Kindergarten students could start in groups of five each day for four days, with all twenty attending on the fifth school day.

Providing Training for School Staff

- School boards provide training for school staff to familiarize them with effective intervention strategies and the use of assistive devices.

Examples of Effective Practice

School boards can:

- provide workshops for teachers, before the start of school, focusing on the special needs of the children who will be entering their classrooms;
- provide training for teachers on specific strategies and equipment for children with special needs who will be entering their classrooms (e.g., adaptive equipment, assistive devices, specialized computer hardware or software);
- hold a meeting with the school-based special education resource teacher and the receiving teacher to discuss needs and strategies. Other participants might include the parents, the principal, and school board office staff.

Reviewing the Entry-to-School Process

- Schools review and revise individual entry-to-school plans and procedures, as required.

Examples of Effective Practice

Schools can:

- provide parents with a survey to complete after participating in a registration clinic, and again one month after the child has started school, to gather information about the effectiveness of the school-entry process. The school should report back to parents on the results of this feedback so they understand that their input has been noted and valued;
- conduct informal reviews of the process, as necessary. This could involve interviews with staff, parents, and community partners;
- review the school-entry plans for individual children and revise them as required.

For children with special needs, the review process generally involves additional participants, such as representatives from preschool agencies. The school-entry team or individual student planning team should identify strategies for monitoring and evaluating the child's preparation for school entry.

Planning Calendar

The following chronology sets out a possible timeline for various entry-to-school activities. Activities in the column "For Children With Special Needs" are *additional* to those in the "For All Children" column.

Month	For All Children	For Children With Special Needs
September/October	• Establish school-based planning team consisting of principal/vice-principal, Kindergarten teacher(s).	• Begin to identify preschool programs and services that serve children with special needs. Involve the special education resource teacher as appropriate.
November to January	• Provide community groups with information packages for distribution to parents of children who may register. • Establish formal registration dates for all children. • Conduct community information sessions to provide parents with information about available community services and school programs.	• Communicate with community childcare and service providers about children with special needs. • Involve the special education resource teacher and school board special education coordinator, as necessary, for children with special needs. • In the information packages, ask parents of children with special needs to complete the profile in the package and call the school for an appointment with the principal to complete registration and begin entry planning.
January/February	• Conduct registration for all children not yet registered.	• Conduct case conferences for children with special needs, including parents, preschool service providers, and the school team (with parental approval). • Develop a written, individualized, entry-to-school plan to help prepare the child to start school. • Have school staff begin to plan for programs and services that will be required when the child arrives in September.

Month	For All Children	For Children With Special Needs
February to April	• Plan a Kindergarten information night for all parents (see Appendix A.3 for sample list of topics). • Plan orientation activities as appropriate to each school community (e.g., school visits, school social activity to welcome new students, school tours by principal or teachers). • Implement planned activities to prepare for entry to school.	• Have the Kindergarten teacher or special education staff visit the child in the preschool setting, and arrange for the preschool service provider to visit the school setting to become familiar with it.
April/May/June	• Conduct Kindergarten information meeting. • Complete orientation activities.	• Conduct review of school-entry plans for children with special needs. • Conduct follow-up case conferences, if required.
July/August	• Communicate with child and parents about details for school start, including start date, schedule (alternate-day, morning, or afternoon), teacher's name, classroom assignment, first day procedures, and so on. • Conduct bus orientation in schools where busing is required.	• Encourage parents to practise school routines with child.
August/September	• Arrange for parent and child to tour the classroom and meet the teacher before school starts. • If feasible and appropriate, use a staggered-entry format to ensure a more comfortable start. • Review entry process with school planning team to see if plans were successful or if future modifications would improve results for children.	• Use the entry plan for children with special needs to begin to develop the Individual Education Plan. • Review entry process with case conference team to see if plans were successful or if future modifications would improve results for children.
September/October	• Begin process for following year.	

Planning Entry to School: Roles and Responsibilities

The following chart outlines possible roles and responsibilities of participants in the planning process. Roles and responsibilities in the column "Planning for Children With Special Needs" are *additional* to those in the "Planning for All Children" column.

Planning for All Children	Planning for Children With Special Needs
The parents:	
• participate in early registration clinics and other enrolment-related activities; • share information about the child; • share required records, including medical information about immunizations, allergies, and ongoing conditions, if any (e.g., asthma, vision problems, hearing problems); • prepare the child for school by: – participating in school orientation; – helping the child practise new routines and skills.	• pre-register the child; • describe special needs of the child; • participate in case conference for the child.
The preschool agency:*	
• supports children's entry to school by: – communicating with the school and parents in the language of instruction; – providing early notification (with parental consent) to the board or school about children who will be starting school; – sharing information about the children (with parental consent); – sharing information about services (in the language of instruction); – collaborating with entry-to-school planning team.	• supports children's entry to school by: – sharing successful program strategies, where applicable; – planning and participating in case conference(s), as appropriate; – maintaining contact with the school during first term, if required.

* Early Years Centres provide an important link between preschool and Kindergarten.

Planning for All Children	Planning for Children With Special Needs
The school board:**	
• collaborates with other school boards and district-wide community partners to develop and establish board-wide entry-to-school planning policy and procedures; • supports district-wide communications; • reviews issues and outcomes.	• facilitates school-level entry-to-school planning for children with special needs; • provides training as required.
The principal:	
• coordinates an entry-to-school planning team and establishes a school-level plan; • defines procedures; • implements the plan; • monitors any issues that are raised in the process.	• involves parents, system-level personnel, and community partners in implementing a system-level plan; • gathers information; • coordinates case conference(s) for children with special needs; • coordinates orientation for children with special needs; • monitors any issues that are raised in the process.
The classroom and/or special education teacher:	
• facilitate(s) the child's entry to the classroom by: – serving on entry-to-school planning team; – participating in parent information meetings and orientation activities.	• facilitate(s) the child's entry to the classroom by: – participating in case conference(s) for children with special needs; – observing children with special needs in preschool programs; – assisting the preschool agency in identifying the skills the child will require for a successful entry to school.

** System-level personnel (e.g., the superintendent, principal/coordinator of special education, or program consultant) often carry out these responsibilities.

Definitions

Barrier. Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Barrier free. A condition in which barriers are removed and new barriers are prevented from being erected.

Community agency. An agency that may be not-for-profit or funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The mandate of such an agency includes the provision of services or support for preschool children with special needs (e.g., Preschool Speech-Language Program, Infant Hearing, Preschool Intervention Program for Children with Autism).

Coterminous boards. Publicly funded District School Boards and Catholic District School Boards in the same geographic area.

Effective practice. A school or classroom practice that helps children to adjust quickly to school, enjoy learning, and develop a positive attitude to education.

Entry-to-school eligibility. Children usually enter school between the ages of three years eight months, and six years, depending on the entry level (Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, or Grade 1).

Entry-to-school plan. A plan prepared collaboratively by school board and school staff, parents, and preschool service providers. An entry-to-school plan is recommended for all children with special needs who have received preschool services from community service providers. The purpose of the plan is to help the child make a smooth entry to school.

Protocol. An agreement between school boards and community agencies that outlines the processes, responsibilities, and timelines for the development of entry-to-school plans for children with special needs.

Readiness to learn. Age-appropriate development in physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language, general knowledge, and cognitive skills.

Special education consultant/coordinator. A teacher designated by the school board to provide leadership in the planning and delivery of special education programs and services either across the board or in specific areas of the board.

Special education resource teacher. A special education teacher assigned to a school to provide support to students with special education needs and their teachers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Documents From School Boards and Community Agencies

These samples have been provided by school boards and community agencies and are reprinted with their permission. School boards may adapt these samples as appropriate to meet local requirements.

A.1 Let's Learn: Kindergarten Registration 32

A.2 All About Me: An Introduction Package for the Elementary Student 34

A.3 Outline of Routines and Expectations, Distributed at Kindergarten Parent Information Meeting 38

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A.5 Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program: Ready for School 42

A.6 Personalized Welcome Note to Child Entering Junior Kindergarten 44

A.7 Welcome Letter to Parents 45

A.8 Outline of Services and Programs for the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance 46

A.9 Description of a Collaborative Preschool-to-School Transition Process in Hamilton 48

A.10 Description of the "Healthy Babies Healthy Children" Program, Ministry of Children and Youth Services 49

A.11 Parents' Information Kit 50

A.12 Steps to School for Children With Special Needs 68

A.13 Entry Plan for Kindergarten Students With Special Needs 70

A.14 The Welcome Checklist for Elementary Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders 71

A.15 Description of the Fair Start Preschool Screening Program, 2004 75

A.16 Junior Kindergarten Enrolments: Students With Special Needs (Sample protocol to assist parents in registering children with special needs) 77

A.17 Early School Transition for Students With Special Needs: A Social Story Book 78

A.1 Let's Learn: Kindergarten Registration

Hey! 3 Year Olds

Ready, Set... Let's Go to School

Let's Learn

Kindergarten Registration

STEPS TO SCHOOL

August/September
One year before – explore options for JK/SK registration

October/November
- attend school registration in your community
- identify and share information about your child's needs
- follow up with support services if needed - referral to community agencies

January/March
Further contact with your local school

April/June
Classroom visit with your child - optional

September
Your child starts first day of school

September/November
Parent/Teacher interviews; more specific goals are identified

STEPS TO SCHOOL

The year before your child starts JK or SK .....

Step #1:
"Finding Out" – August / September
- **one year** before your child is to start school, call your nearest school to introduce yourself and your child
- attend parent meetings to gain information about all programs being offered in Kindergarten such as French Immersion
- discuss the needs of your child with the school principal at a meeting location of your choice
- you may ask a friend or advocate to attend ongoing meetings with you for support

Step #2:
"Signing Up" - Registration – October / November
- attend the "Ready, Set, Let's Go to School" Kindergarten registration clinic in your community to register your child for school and receive the "Entry To School" package
- share information about the needs of your special child with the school
- discuss a plan for your child's needs by linking to all supports and current services involved with your child

Step #3:
"Learning All About Me" – January / March
- share and plan together with the school, along with community service partners involved.
- attend parent information meetings that are offered
- plan a visit to the school with your child to develop a positive relationship

Step #4:
"Visiting the School" - April / May / June
- plan to visit the Kindergarten classroom with your child
- attend community events held at the school
- visit and explore the school playground

Step #5:
"Welcome to School" - September
- entry to school interview - child/parent/teacher
- delayed entry plan and your child's first day at school

A.1 Let's Learn: Kindergarten Registration

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Children may start school in September if they turn 4 (JK) or 5 (SK) by December 31 of that year. They are not legally required to attend school until age 6. You can choose whether or not to send your child to Junior or Senior Kindergarten.
- Your choices are:
  - enrol your child in the neighbourhood school
  - enrol your child in school and continue in the nursery school/child care program on alternate days
  - do not enrol your child

You may change your mind at any time during this process. Discuss enrolment concerns with the school Principal.

- Planning ahead helps with smooth entry to the school system.
- Start this process in the Fall of the year before you are thinking of enrolling your child in school for the following September.
- The principal is your first contact at the school. He/She may assign another staff member to be your contact within the school.
- Ask about the school's "Let's Learn" information sessions for parents.
- Your school contact, Pre-school Resource Teacher, Family Support Worker, Early Intervention Worker, or a friend may help you through this process and accompany you to meetings to help plan for a smooth entry for your child to school.

Questions to consider and helpful hints in preparing your child for school are available from Early Years Centres, Pre-school Resource Program or your school.

Your child's first day at school is a very big step. There are many steps to take in making your child's entry to school a smooth and comfortable one whether your child starts in Junior or Senior Kindergarten.
We hope these ideas will help you and your child look forward to a memorable start to school.

Happy Learning!

Meeting The Needs Of All Children

Programs are planned to ensure success for each child and student. Progress is followed in all areas of development as part of our Early and Ongoing Identification Process. Where particular needs are evident, each school has access to Board and local community support services.

The Resource Teams within the local Boards consist of: Psychometrists, Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Attendance Counsellors, and Resource Teachers. Members of this team, either individually or in partnership with one another, are available to provide support to students who have learning needs, their parents, the classroom teachers, and the in-school resource team. The Resource Teams also work in partnership with many local community agencies.

Agencies

Community Care Access Centre
225 18th St. West
Owen Sound, ON N0G 2V0
Tel: 371-2112 Fax: 372-0561

Bruce County Social Services
399 30 Park St.
Walkerton, ON N0G 2V0
Tel: 881-0431 Fax: 881-1619

Community Living Owen Sound
769 4th Ave. East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 2N5
Tel: 371-9251 Fax: 371-5168

Ministry of Community, Family & Social Services
945 3rd Ave. East, Box 697
Owen Sound, ON N4K 5R4
Tel: 376-1951 Fax: 376-4254

Community Living Kincardine & District
P.O. Box 9000, 286 Lambton St.
Kincardine, ON N2Z 2Z3
Tel: 396-9434 Fax:396-4514

Bluewater District School Board
351 1st Ave. North
Chesley, ON N0G 1L0
Tel: 363-2014 Fax: 363-3448

Grey Bruce Health Services
Box 1800, 1800 8th St. East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 6M9
Tel: 376-2121 Fax: 376-1846

Walkerton & District Community Support Services
19 Durham St. East
Walkerton, ON N0G 2V0
Tel: 881-3713 Fax: 881-0531

Grey Bruce Health Unit
920 1st Ave. West
Owen Sound, ON N4K 4K5
Tel: 376-9240 Fax: 376-1287

Grey County Social Services
P.O. Box 9, 509 9th Ave. East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P1
Tel: 371-2600 Fax: 371-6440

Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board
799 16th Ave.
Hanover, ON N4N 3A1
Tel: 364-5820 Fax: 364-5882

Bruce-Grey Children's Services
845 2nd Ave. East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 2H2
Tel: 1-800-567-2384 or 371-4773

A.2 All About Me: An Introduction Package for the Elementary Student

All About Me
An . . . INTRODUCTION PACKAGE

For the **Elementary Student**

Dear Parents:

Please help us to get to know your child better by completing the "All About Me" Introduction Package.

We have provided you with a template to be used as a guide to help you complete the package.

Please:
- include your child's picture or a series of pictures of your child engaged in favourite activities
- follow the progression of headings
- the package can be completed in point form
- link interests, strengths and challenges to strategies that work
- ask your child to personalize his/her "All About Me" Introduction Package
(. . . in his/her own words; or by drawing a picture, etc.)
- use any other creative ideas that you feel might help us to know your child.

(Some parents have included videos with the "All About Me" packages so that we could meet your child "in action".)

Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board Student Services 2004

All About Me
An Introduction Package
For the Elementary Student

INTRODUCTION

My name is_____. I will be_____years old on _____. I will be coming to _____School on (date)_____.

Picture of the Child

About Me
Please provide a bit of background information
(place of birth/siblings/...anything !)

Words people use to describe me:
(list as many adjectives as possible)
e.g., happy, funny, bossy, moody

Things people say about me:
(catchy phrases)
e.g., "He makes me laugh!"/ "She makes me see things differently."

OCCDSB Student Services 2004

A.2 *(continued)*

Things I'm really good at (What I love to do):
(special interests, skills)

These are a few of my favourite things ....
(list "things")

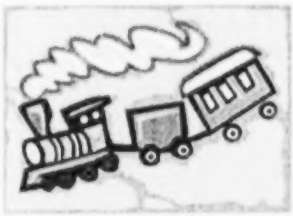
Things I do for others ....
(special gifts s/he gives to you)

My Challenges	**Strategies that work . . . It would really help me if you could . . .** (Please give ideas, examples and "key" words or phrases that work).
~Things I do not like: **~Things that distress me:** **~Things that make me anxious:** **~Things that upset me:** **~Things I am not good at:** **~Read these "SIGNS"**	

OCCDSB Student Services 2004

You really need to know:
(any special concerns – diet, a reference to medication,
any other items you wish to highlight)

I'm Looking Forward to doing these things this year:
(expectations) – (parents' target goals)



OCCDSB Student Services 2004

A.3 Outline of Routines and Expectations, Distributed at Kindergarten Parent Information Meeting

Holy Family Separate School
180 King Street South
Alliston, Ontario L9R 1B9
TEL: (705) 435-3989 FAX: (705) 435-1228

"You may give without loving, but you cannot love without giving"

Holy Family School
Kindergarten Parent Information Meeting

We would like to warmly welcome you and your child to the school community of Holy Family. We look forward to working together to provide the experiences necessary to encourage your child's spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional growth. The Junior and Senior Kindergarten classes are scheduled for full days on an "A" and "B" day schedule. A School Board calendar will be sent home on the first day of school clearly outlining this schedule.

We trust that the following brief outline of important routines and expectations will be helpful as you prepare your child for his/her first day of school. A detailed information booklet outlining daily routines, expectations, curriculum guidelines, dates for reporting and assessment processes will also be provided.

First Day of School: To ease the transition from home to school an appointment will be set up for you and your child to meet with the teacher. This will provide an opportunity to become acquainted with the teacher, the classroom, daily activities and procedures. We will also have a progressive entry of Junior Kindergarten students. Over the first two weeks of school we will be gradually admitting a few students to the class at a time. In June, a personalized letter will be mailed to each family clearly outlining the date(s) and procedures for the interview and your child's first day of school.

Safe Arrival: To help ensure the safety of all students we have a Safe Arrival Program at our school. Every student is enrolled in this program. Parents are requested to phone the school if their child will be absent. An answering machine will take your message on weekends, holidays and before or after school. If you have not called the school and your child is absent, a call will be made home or to your place of work to confirm your child's absence.

Regular School Day: The school day begins at 8:55 a.m. All Kindergarten children meet in the Kindergarten play area at the front of the school. Outdoor supervision begins at 8:40 a.m. Children are admitted to the classroom at 8:55 a.m. Your child's teacher will meet all students as they enter the schoolyard. School is dismissed at 3:25 p.m. If you are picking up your child, it is important to be on time. The classroom teacher will bring the students out to the play area at the end of the day. All students riding on a bus will be placed on the bus by their teacher.

Transportation: Transportation before 9:00 a.m. and after 3:30 p.m. will be by regular school bus for children who live outside of Alliston. Transportation is only provided within the Holy Family boundaries and has been arranged for the regular bus stop nearest your home address. Staff will greet the children at the bus area and ensure that they safely enter the Kindergarten play area. At the end of the day, a parent or guardian must meet the bus when it arrives at your home or designated bus stop.

Illness: Please ensure that we know of any allergies or medical conditions that your child may have. Medications must be delivered to the office in their original container and are only administered through the office. Medication forms will be available at the office and must be completed before medication can be administered.

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

Shopping Tips: In preparing your child for Kindergarten we ask that you consider purchasing the following items: A backpack is recommended and we suggest that your selection be lightweight and large enough to carry your child's lunch bag and the many creations that may be completed within a given day. A pair of indoor running shoes will be needed and we ask that all shoes fasten with Velcro.

Lunch and Snack Time: Your child will have two snack times and a lunch break. We ask that you be conscious of nutrition when selecting snacks and packing a lunch for your child. We encourage easy to manage, reusable containers, as well as thermoses or reusable plastic drink containers. Some children have severe reactions to peanuts; therefore our Kindergarten classes must remain "nut free." Please do not send snacks that may contain: peanut butter, peanuts, tree nuts, and foods with warning "may contain nuts or peanuts or processed in a facility that processes nuts or peanuts."

Assessment and Reporting: Informal assessment of your child's learning takes place on a daily basis and is an integral part of all learning activities. During each school day teachers assess for different purposes using various techniques. Classroom observations of daily participation and task completion combine with formal/informal evaluation rubrics to gather data relating to students' growth and achievement. In response to both formative (ongoing assessment) and summative assessments (completed at the end of each unit or term) there are three formal reporting periods throughout each school year. The classroom teacher will prepare a written report for each term. In November, the entire school celebrates learning at scheduled three-way conferences involving parent/student/teacher. In March, a written report is sent home, and in June the final formal report of the year is completed and sent home. Additional interviews to discuss progress and celebrate learning can be arranged at any time throughout the school year.

Home/School Communication: A detailed school newsletter is sent home on the first of each month clearly outlining the many events and celebrations within our school community. Kindergarten teachers also prepare special classroom newsletters that are also sent home at the beginning of each month. These newsletters outline curriculum being covered as well as special events and celebrations that are specific to each class. Teachers will call home to share specific issues with parents and to celebrate the success of your child. We also encourage parents to call your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns.

Tips To Help Prepare Your Child For School

It is important to note that many of the skills and attitudes which can help to contribute to your child's successful entry to Junior Kindergarten can be effectively taught before he/she enters school. Please assist your child in developing confidence with the following:

1. Knowing his/her family name, the name(s) of family members.
2. Being courteous with children and adults – using please, thank you, excuse me, etc.
3. Putting on and taking off his/her shoes and outer clothing; manipulating zippers and buttons.
4. Caring for his/her toilet needs independently.
5. Forming good eating and sleeping habits.
6. Reading to/with your child each and every day.

In Junior and Senior Kindergarten the traditional subjects, including Religious Education, Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science, are woven into an integrated learning experience based on the developmental needs of the students. Early literacy is a key area of focus throughout the many activities of our day. We ask that you spend some time each evening reading with your son/daughter. A variety of programmes and materials will be shared from home to school including our very popular B.E.A.R. Reading Club – "Be Enthusiastic About Reading". Monthly classroom newsletters will provide ongoing tips and strategies to assist your child in the development of effective reading and writing skills.

"We look forward to sharing many wonderful years with you and your child."

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

A.4 Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Toronto District School Board

Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Starting school is a big step in your child's life. It is an exciting time–a time for many firsts. Your child is entering a school system that values the uniqueness and diversity of all its learners and works to provide each and every student with an outstanding education. We look forward to working with you and your child in the next school year and in the years to come. Before the first day of school, take some time to visit the school with your child so that the route to school, the building, and the school surroundings become familiar.

Here are some other suggestions to help your child get ready for school.

At School **Children will:**	At home **To prepare your child, you can:**
make a variety of choices (e.g., choosing activities in the class, materials to use).	help your child make choices at home (e.g., clothes to wear, activities to do).
share materials and space with other children.	provide opportunities for your child to be with other children, to learn to share, wait, and take turns.
need to adapt to new people, situations, and routines.	provide new situations for your child (e.g., going to the library for story time). Talk about what to expect beforehand. Respond positively to your child's efforts to adapt.
dress themselves to go home and to play outside.	encourage your child to practise putting on jackets, snowpants, boots, etc. independently.
communicate needs to other children and adults.	encourage your child to use language to make needs known and to solve problems (e.g., getting a drink, going to the bathroom, asking for help).
see adults and other children write for different purposes. Children will use materials for writing (e.g., crayons, markers).	involve your child in writing (e.g., drawing, making cards, and signing.) Talk about your child's name and the letters in their name. Encourage and celebrate your child's attempts to write.
listen to stories, poems, rhymes, and books with information. They will have books to hold, look at, and read.	tell stories and say poems and rhymes in your own language. Read to your child and talk about the pictures, the ideas, and the words and letters. Point out words, numbers, and signs in the community Visit the library with your child.
explore the natural things in their world.	talk with your child about the things they see or hear on walks and trips. Notice changes that occur (e.g., seasons, growth, construction).

A parent is a child's first and most important teacher.

learn about numbers, shapes, patterns, sorting, estimating, measuring, and talk about their observations.	involve your child in sorting activities (e.g. toys, clothes, putting away food). When cooking, talk about how much is needed and let them fill and pour. Talk about shapes and patterns in their environment. Play games with your child (e.g., matching and counting, cards, simple board games).
have opportunities to create pictures, structures, music, songs, and rhymes and engage in dramatic play.	encourage your child's use of imagination through drawing, building, moving to music, and acting out stories.
use different types of materials and equipment to develop large and small muscles.	provide opportunities for your child to exercise and develop large muscles (e.g., running, climbing, playing with a ball), and small muscles (e.g., crayons, pencils, playdough).

A.5 Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program: Ready for School

Neighbourhood
Early Learning Program

Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program

Ready for School

2004 - 2005

The "Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program" (TVNELP) was developed to facilitate the transition to Junior Kindergarten for 3-year-olds and their parents. This project is specifically aimed at connecting preschool children and their families with community partners. It allows parents the opportunity to meet and connect with the community agencies prior to enrolment in Junior Kindergarten as a proactive measure to increase development of literacy, numeracy, health, and social skills. It also provides parents and children a positive connection with the educational system. The project was initiated through a collaboration of community partners and two school boards - the London District Catholic School Board and the Thames Valley District School Board. Funding is provided by the Thames Valley District School Board, the London Catholic District School Board, and the City of London.

Participants of the program are children who are eligible to enter Junior Kindergarten the following year, and their parents/guardians. This program will give 3-year-olds and their parents an opportunity to visit the school in their neighbourhood 4 times before they enter Junior Kindergarten. Workshops are also offered to community agencies that provide support for children with special needs to highlight *Ready for School* and encourage children with special needs to attend. The program involves four separate sessions in which the preschooler and parent or caregiver attend and take part in activities. The four session days include an orientation/healthy active living/music day, literacy/numeracy/art days and a classroom visit for the children and a parenting skills component for the adults. A multicultural component also encompasses these sessions. These sessions take place between January and June. They are usually 1½ hours in length and are at times during the day that are convenient for the individual school community.

The following Community Partners are integral to making *Ready for School* a success. These agencies provide important information on child development, activities that parents can do at home, and programs offered that children and parents can attend prior to the start of Junior Kindergarten.

All Kids Belong
Investing in Children
London Children's Connection
Ontario Early Years Centres
Public Health Units
Tyke TALK
Childreach
Libraries
Merrymount
Oxford Community Child Care Centres
Thames Valley Children's Centre
YMCA
The University of Western Ontario School of Communication Sciences and Disorders

The following goals are central to the TVNELP philosophy:

- To develop links between Ontario Early Years Centres, Community Agencies and School Boards to optimize the available resources for parents and children
- To build quality family literacy, numeracy, healthy active living, arts, and music programs for parents/caregivers from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds
- To provide opportunities for children to participate in activities that enhance their potential for academic success and improved social/emotional outcomes
- To provide guided observation and learning opportunities for parents that are relevant to the developmental stages and needs of their children
- To provide learning opportunities for children and their parents to engage in structured, shared activities with the schools

A project outcome/evaluation component is also an important aspect of the program. It includes a tracking of school registration and attendance, comparison with a control group regarding school entry, collecting anecdotal data from parents about the program, and tracking data related to early identification and future academic achievement.

For additional information contact [redacted] Learning Supervisor – School and Community Services and TVNELP Project Manager, Thames Valley District School Board (519) 452-2125 or email [redacted]

Thames Valley

London District Catholic School Board

London Canada

A.6 Personalized Welcome Note to Child Entering Junior Kindergarten

Dear _____

Welcome to **St. Matthew School.**

You will be attending Junior Kindergarten in our **morning class.**

I would like to invite you and your parents to visit me in your new Kindergarten classroom on _____ from _____ .

Make sure to bring your smile because I want to take your picture!

When all my Classroom Visits have been completed, you and a small group of new JK friends are invited to join the Senior Kindergarten children for a half-day visit on _____ from _____ .

You will be starting regular classes on Friday, September 17th.

I can hardly wait for the fun to begin.

See you in September!

Love,

_____

Waterloo Catholic District School Board

A.7 Welcome Letter to Parents

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
46 Alliance Boulevard Barrie, Ontario L4M 5K3
Telephone (705) 722-3555 Extension 223
Facsimile (705) 722-8865

September 7, 2004

Each of our Catholic schools is a faith community that shares a collective vision: we are a faith-filled Catholic learning community dedicated to excellence

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We are pleased to welcome your child to school. As your child's first teacher, you have provided a loving environment at home, which has made learning a joyful experience. As your child begins his/her journey in learning at school, we plan to provide many experiences and activities which will continue that learning in a wide variety of areas and – most importantly in the early years – in reading and writing.

The "Welcome to School" bag your child has received today includes materials which will encourage further play with reading, writing, drawing, and creating at home. As children use these materials, they are developing literacy skills. These materials include: books to enjoy with your child, scissors, glue, construction paper, scrap book and a prayer card.

We hope you will take some time to help your son or daughter explore and play with these materials. We know that when young children learn joyfully, they become successful readers, writers and learners throughout their years in school. The enclosed card offers some ideas you may wish to use to encourage further learning.

Our Catholic school community welcomes your child to new beginnings – in school, in faith and in life.

Sincerely,

Director of Education

A.8 Outline of Services and Programs for the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance

Grey Bruce Children's Alliance

In Bruce and Grey Counties we have a long history of working collaboratively to provide integrated services for children and families. Programs funded by three Ministries (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care) have resulted from these cooperative efforts. High levels of collaboration among agencies have resulted in numerous programs and services being jointly delivered across the district to better meet the needs of our large rural area that includes three First Nations communities.

Many of these initiatives were born out of necessity since no one agency had the funding or the mandate to provide the comprehensive service that children and families required. A shared belief in the need to ensure the best use of our limited resources has spurred us on in our efforts to avoid any duplication and/or overlap of programs. Finally, we recognized that every agency had its strengths and that if we built upon each otherís strengths we would create enhanced programs and services for children.

Our new Alliance builds on earlier ongoing collaborative efforts and an ongoing commitment to explore how we can best achieve comprehensive planning for the children and youth in our community.

The following provides an overview of several of the success stories that we have achieved so far.

The Ontario Early Years Centre Bruce Grey Owen Sound (OEYC) - a Unique Rural Model
In Bruce and Grey Counties, Ontario Early Years Centre services are delivered through a unique rural model. Local planners representing health, education, social services and parents developed a model that incorporated provincial requirements while responding to the needs and realities of families in our large rural community. Rather than develop a single site with limited outreach capacity, the Bruce Grey network includes two main sites, 12 satellites and about 30 outreach locations. As a result, most families in Bruce and Grey can access Ontario Early Years Centre services within a 15-minute drive. The model creates an accessible, safe, welcoming, local environment for families where they can belong, and connect to other programs and services.

"Let's Learn Clinics" - Collaborative School Entry Planning and Programming
This partnership involves the two coterminous District School Boards, Grey Bruce Heath Unit, Community Living Associations, Early Years Centres, Social Services from both Bruce and Grey Counties and numerous other local agencies and support services. The project provides for an extensive pre-school screening process in conjunction with early registration for Junior and Senior Kindergarten. Professionals such as a speech language pathologist, a pre-school resource teacher, a public health nurse and OEYC and child care centre staff are available at the clinics to answer questions and conduct pre-school assessments. In addition, school staff are also present to share information. These clinics are now offered throughout both school boards. Evaluation data that have been gathered indicate that parents, school staff and community agency representatives are extremely pleased with the outcomes of this project. Some of the positive outcomes that have been identified include: enhanced school readiness, earlier and more intensive intervention and the development of far more reliable statistics about the type and number of pre-school services that are required for children and families.

School-Age Speech and Language Support
This initiative involves the two coterminous District School Boards and the Community Care Access Centre. This project is a method of providing speech and language services which focuses on providing school staff and their students with a full range of service options delivered by the same speech language pathologist. Students are served by the speech language pathologist responsible for a geographically defined group of schools regardless of their Ministry association, employing organization and/or the assessed difficulty. The benefits of this partnership have been recognized by all involved including: students, parents, school staff and speech language pathologists.

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Support
This partnership involves the two coterminous District School Boards, Bruce Grey Childrenís Services and the Counties of Bruce and Grey. Seven teams have been created to serve children with severe emotional and behavioural challenges. The teams comprise a social worker, child and youth worker and a behaviour lead teacher. The social workers in the public system and all of the child and youth workers are funded by the childrenís mental health sector while the teachers are funded by Education. Additional funding is provided through grants from the municipalities. The model has proved so successful that we have been able to adapt it to meet the needs of expelled pupils within their home communities. This is especially important given the rural nature of our area and the vast geography that we cover. The program is in its fifth year of operation and has proved to be an extremely important component of our school and childrenís mental health service delivery continuum. We have been invited to share information about the program across the province with representatives from both school boards and childrenís services agencies.

A.9 Description of a Collaborative Preschool-to-School Transition Process in Hamilton

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

100 Main Street West, P. O. Box 2558
Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3L1 Telephone: (905) 527-5092

2004 11 03

Director of Special Education, Policy and Program Branch
2 Carleton Street
7th floor, Ste. 710
Toronto, Ontario
M5B 1J3

Dear

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the City of Hamilton's process for students with special needs transitioning to school. We have developed a wonderful collaborative partnership here in Hamilton. Representation includes Community Care Access Centre; Hamilton Health Sciences, McMaster Children's Hospital; Early Words; City of Hamilton; Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board; Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board; and Integration Resources Hub. Integration Resources Hub represents those organizations that provide support for special needs children prior to school entry. These agencies include: Early Childhood Integration Support Services, the City of Hamilton, District Council of Co-operative Pre-schools, Community Living Hamilton and McMaster Children's Hospital.

As a partnership, we are working towards a common goal. Our goal is that a positive experience occurs for families and children as they transition from pre-school to school. Our values are that children with special needs and their families be treated with respect and honesty. We understand that the process of transition creates anxiety and questions for parents. Our process was developed to build confidence, empowerment and independence by communicating to parents the programs, supports and services that are available to students in school. It also assists our schools to have available the resources required for September when the child arrives. Our committee begins planning in October prior to the children registering in school. In December we mail out to parents the Child Information Sheet and Invitation to our Parent Information Evening. We hold a Parent Information Evening in January. The first part of the agenda is prepared and presented by our pre-school agencies, and the second part of the agenda allows parents to meet with either the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board or the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. In the spring, individual meetings are held with the parents, individuals they wish to invite, and the schools. Discussion at these meetings focus on the child's strengths and needs, in order to arrange appropriate support and services to be available in September.

We are very proud of the process we have developed here in Hamilton and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Manager
Communication Services

attach.

A.10 Description of the "Healthy Babies Healthy Children" Program, Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Caring for your new baby: Healthy Babies Healthy Children

Healthy Babies Healthy Children is a prevention/early intervention initiative designed to help families promote healthy child development and help their children achieve their full potential. This free voluntary program is offered to pregnant women and families with young children through local Public Health Units.

What funding and/or service(s) are provided under the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program?

Healthy Babies Healthy Children consists of six services:

1. All families with young children can be screened for any risks to healthy child development. Screening can occur prenatally, postpartum and/or anytime up to age six;
2. Families with young children are assessed for level of risk to healthy child development. Assessment can occur prenatally, postpartum and/or anytime up to age six;
3. All new parents who consent to being contacted receive a phone call within 48 hours of being discharged from the hospital. New parents are offered a home visit from a public health nurse, and are provided with information on other parenting resources available in the community. These community nursing services are available to all families of newborns in Ontario, and are designed to help mothers and newborns make the transition from hospital to the community;
4. Recommendations for other services for families with young children who are at low to moderate risk of problems with healthy child development, and formal referrals to services for families who are at high risk of problems with healthy child development;
5. Home visits from peer or lay home visitors as well as from public health nurses for families with young children who are at high risk of problems with healthy child development; and
6. Service planning and co-ordination for families with young children who are at high risk of problems with healthy child development.

Who is eligible for this program?

Healthy Babies Healthy Children is designed to:

- Give all families in Ontario the information and support they need to give their children a healthy start in life; and
- Provide more intensive services and supports for families with children who may need special assistance to reach their full potential.

How do I apply for this program?

Doctors, midwives, or nurses will introduce most new parents to the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program at the hospital at the time of the birth of their child, or before or after the birth of their child. All new parents who agree to be contacted will receive a phone call within 48 hours of being discharged from the hospital and they will be offered a home visit.

Families with children up to the age of six can also contact the program if they have concerns about their child's development. Find the nearest Healthy Babies Healthy Children program by contacting your local Public Health Unit.

For More Information

If you need more information about the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program, contact your local Public Health Unit or visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website. Or, call the ministry INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 (Toll-free in Ontario only). In Toronto, call 416-314-5518 TTY 1-800-387-5559.

Reprinted from http://www.children.gov.on.ca/cs/en/programs/beststart/healthy/default.htm.

A.11 Parents' Information Kit

Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario

École publique Héritage

820 Lakeshore Drive
North Bay ON P1A 2G8

Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8

Parents' Information Kit

(Translated from "Trousse d'information à l'intention des parents", a booklet produced by Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario)

Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario
École publique Héritage

Dear parents of our "Dragons",

We will shortly be beginning a new school year. Our team at Héritage is looking forward to a school year enriched with academic, sports, cultural and social activities. You never forget things you have learned while enjoying yourself.

It is in this spirit of sharing and joy that we welcome the Dragons in September. The mission of our team members is to create a positive climate to promote and experience living in our language and to facilitate success in school. In addition, we will develop even more strategies to reduce incidents of bullying in the school and on the playground.

Each of us will make an effort to communicate with you on a regular basis. This partnership between you and the educators is essential in your child's academic development. Our school wants to be an extension of the home, without any distinctions of race, religion or family lifestyle.

In order to make the beginning of school easier, we ask you to become familiar with the enclosed information kit. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at 472-0652.

Things are better in September when we're together.

For our English-speaking parents, please feel free to contact the school for any further clarifications.

Principal

A.11 *(continued)*

École publique Héritage
Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 Staff

Principal	Mr.
Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten	Ms.
ALF [French-language development] Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten	Ms. Ms.
Grade 1	Ms.
Grade 2	Ms.
Grade 3	Mr.
Special Education Resource Personnel	Ms. Ms.
Special Needs Counsellor	Ms.
Physical Education	Mr.
Maintenance Staff	Ms. Mr.
Secretary	Ms.
Educational Assistants	Ms. Mr.

Student Transportation

The Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario provides student transportation for all the Dragons at **École publique Héritage**, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8.

When you enrolled your child, you informed us whether or not transportation was required. If you checked "yes", we will contact you between now and the beginning of school to inform you of the approximate times your child will be picked up and dropped off.

If you checked "no", but now think that student transportation is necessary, you just need to contact the Secretary at 472-0652 so she can reserve your child's place on the bus.

Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario

A.11 *(continued)*

The "Early Bird" Program

To facilitate families' morning arrangements, the Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est provides a service for students who arrive early every day. **École publique Héritage** opens its doors at 7:30 every morning. The head of the Early Bird program organizes activities and provides help with homework. This service is free for all the Dragons, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. At **École publique Héritage**, the head of the Early Bird program will be Ms. ...

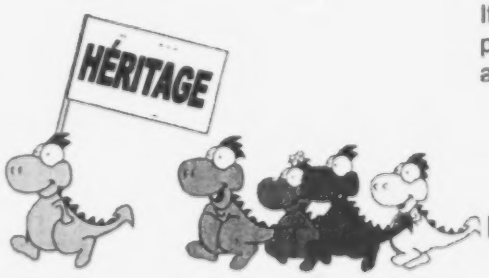
Staggered Entry
Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten

The beginning of school is a big event for the little Dragons in Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten. It is through everyday situations that a child experiences independence and learns to become responsible. However, this process must happen slowly, at the child's own pace. We have therefore organized a system of staggered entry during the first three weeks for Dragons in Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten at **École publique Héritage**.

From Tuesday, September 7, to Friday, September 10, the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers will set aside time to meet with parents to discuss each child's performance and specific needs. **This means that no Dragon in Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten will come to school during that week**. The teachers will contact all the parents individually to plan a meeting.

During the second week, from Monday the 13th to Friday the 17th of September, and during the third week, from Monday the 20th to Friday the 24th of September, the groups will be divided in two. **This means that the Dragons will come to school every second day during those two weeks**. Please consult the attached schedules. The bus companies will also be aware of this timetable.

Beginning on Monday, September 27, **All the Dragons in Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten will come to school on a regular basis**.



If you have any concerns about this timetable, please do not hesitate to contact us as soon as possible.

A.11 *(continued)*

Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten
Ms. …
École publique Héritage

September 2004

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.	Sun.
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Labour Day	7 Interviews with parents	8 Interviews with parents	9 Interviews with parents	10 Interviews with parents	11	12
13 Names of students	14 Names of students	15 Names of students	16 Names of students	17 Names of students	18	19
20 Names of students	21 Names of students	22 Names of students	23 Names of students	24 Names of students	25	26
27 Beginning of school for all the Dragons	28	29	30			

ALF Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten
Ms. ... and Ms. ...
École publique Héritage

September 2004						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.	Sun.
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Labour Day	7 Interviews with parents	8 Interviews with parents	9 Interviews with parents	10 Interviews with parents	11	12
13 Names of students	14 Names of students	15 Names of students	16 Names of students	17 Names of students	18	19
20 Names of students	21 Names of students	22 Names of students	23 Names of students	24 Names of students	25	26
27 Beginning of school for all the Dragons	28	29	30			

A.11 *(continued)*

School Supplies and Materials

The school supplies for all the Dragons at **École publique Héritage** are provided by the school, unless the teaching staff asks for specific materials..

The Dragons in Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten will need:

- a lunch bag (two snacks and one lunch)
- a blanket or beach towel for naptime
- a change of clothing (in case of an accident!)
- a pair of sneakers for the gym (which will be kept at the school)
- a back pack (large enough to hold small projects and the lunch bag)

All the Dragons in Grades 1 through 3 will need:

- a pair of sneakers for the gym
- a lunch bag (two snacks and one lunch)
- a school bag

**** For snacks, we ask for fruits, vegetables, dairy products or grain products only.**

Daily Schedule

8:35 to 8:55	Arrival of students
8:55	Entry of students
9:00	Opening exercises
9:05 to 10:30	Classes
10:30 to 10:45	Recess
10:45 to 12:00	Classes
12:00 to 12:20	Lunch
12:20 to 1:00	Lunchtime recess
1:00 to 2:30	Classes
2:30 to 2:45	Recess
2:45 to 3:20	Classes
3:20 to 3:35	Bus

A.11 *(continued)*

The School Council

School councils play an important role in the Ontario education system. They are a means of allowing parents and other members of the school community to contribute to improving the performance of students and of schools. The school council can make numerous recommendations to the school principal and to the school board. The school principal and the school board must in turn consult the school council on various issues that could influence the performance of students.

Elections for the **École publique Héritage** School Council will be held at the information evening planned for Thursday, September 23, 2004. **All parents are invited to join with us**.

To become a candidate, please call 472-0652. The members of the School Council meet once a month during the school year.

Help Us!

Do you think you could help **École publique Héritage** this year? If so, check off the boxes corresponding to the areas you are interested in. Please fill out this form and return it to the school at the beginning of the school year.

Name of school: _____

Name of parent: _____

Name of child or children:

_____

_____

- ☐ Helping in the classroom
- ☐ Accompanying the students on school trips
- ☐ Cooking
- ☐ Helping with artistic activities
- ☐ Reading to students
- ☐ Helping with monitoring during lunch periods
- ☐ Raising funds
- ☐ Other (specify below)

_____

_____

A.11 *(continued)*

Reading at Home

For a number of years now, the Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario has provided all its students with a free subscription to a French-language magazine. This magazine was sent directly to the home for the child, but this year **it will be given to the children at school**. In this way, the teachers in all grades will be able to use the magazine in the classroom for the teaching of French. We expect to receive confirmation of this subscription by the end of September 2004.

The Administration of Medication

The Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario has developed very specific guidelines concerning the giving out of prescribed medication during class hours.

The Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario allows the giving out of prescribed medication during class hours when doing so is deemed essential and special. Giving the children medicine includes administration orally (by the mouth), by inhalation or using an EpiPen.

The ultimate responsibility for giving a child medicine lies with the school principal, who may delegate that responsibility to a staff member.

Parents must make a written request to the school principal for a medicine to be given to their child. They must fill out the "Request to Authorize Medication" form (please contact the school secretary if you would like this form).

Prescription medication must be given to the school principal in its original container. The medicine must remain at the school until the end of the prescription.

Medicine is given out discreetly, in a way that is respectful towards the student.

If you would like a copy of the policy on the administration of medication during class hours, please contact the school secretary.

A.11 *(continued)*

Emergency Intervention in Case of Severe Allergies

In order to avoid the risk of severe reactions that require emergency services, **École publique Héritage** formally prohibits peanuts and nuts.

We therefore ask you not to send any food with peanuts or other nuts to the school. This rule is **extremely important** for everyone's well-being.

As soon as a parent notifies the school principal that his/her child suffers from severe allergies, he/she must fill out the *"Emergency Intervention in Case of Severe Allergy – Doctor's and Parent's/ Guardian's Instructions"* form, have it signed by a physician and by the parents, and return it to the school as soon as possible. A copy of that form must be posted in the classroom, the lunchroom, the staff room and the central office. Please make the school secretary aware of your needs.

The Comments Notebook

Most of the Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers at **École publique Héritage** have chosen to use a single comments notebook as a way of keeping in daily contact with you, the parents. This comments notebook will be used as a tool for planning homework. This system will allow you to learn how your child's day at school was. We ask for your support in this process by ensuring that you check the comments notebook every night, and by returning it to us the next day.
Here is a sample of a page from the Comments Notebook:

Tuesday

2

My Day

Parent Comments

Parent's Signature

A.11 *(continued)*

Special Services

At **École publique Héritage**, we want all of our Dragons to succeed. To ensure everyone's success, we provide our Dragons with special services. The following are the mandates of the resource staff that provide these special services:

Position	Resource Person	School	Mandate
Special Needs Counsellor	Ms. ...	Pavillon É.P. Héritage	To meet with the Dragons on an individual basis in order to facilitate their integration into the school environment, in accordance with our standards of behaviour. The Special Needs Counsellor acts as the liaison person between the school and certain community service agencies.
Special Education Resource Person	Ms. ... Ms. ...	É.P. Héritage É.P. Héritage	To coordinate the services for students who are at risk or who have been identified as requiring special education services. The mandate of the resource person includes writing the Individual Education Plan, with the teacher's input. In addition, the resource person supports all other initiatives to facilitate learning among these students.
ALF (French-language development) Services	Ms. ... Ms. ...	É.P. Héritage É.P. Héritage	To facilitate learning among the little Dragons enrolled with us, so they will learn our language and experience our culture. These people guide the Dragons throughout their learning of the language, individually or in small groups.
Speech Therapy Aide	Ms. ...	Schools in the southern region	To intervene with primary-level students who have speech difficulties. To administer various speech therapy programs, in accordance with the recommendations of a Speech Therapist. To write progress reports.
Special Needs Educators	Ms. ... Mr. ... Ms. ... Ms. ... Mr. ...	É.P. Héritage É.P. Héritage É.P. Héritage É.P. Héritage É.P. Héritage	To support the teachers and the resource person in their work with students who are at risk or who have been identified as requiring special education services. These educators act in accordance with the strategies developed as part of the Individual Education Plan.

The child: At the heart of our decisions!

Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario

Steps to School

for

Children with Special Needs

Simcoe County
District School Board

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic
District School Board

Simcoe County Early
Intervention System

Children may start school in September if they turn 4 (JK) or 5 (SK) by December 31 of that year. They are not legally required to attend school until age 6. You can choose whether or not to send your child to Junior or Senior Kindergarten.

You may change your mind at any time during the process; however, early planning provides time to put supports in place.

If your child has special needs, information about starting school is available at your neighbourhood school and early intervention services.

Discuss your child's special needs and your options with your current service provider and with friends and family.

If you choose enrolment, contact the principal of your neighbourhood school to find out how and when to enrol your child in school. (January - March)

Tell the principal about your child's special needs. The principal will arrange an opportunity for you to discuss ways the school might meet your child's special needs.

You may be asked to provide your consent to the gathering and exchange of information between the preschool service system and school boards that would be helpful in planning.

The school, through the principal, will make any agreed referrals to school board services and to the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). On receipt of the referral, the CCAC will send a letter confirming referral to begin the intake process. If you haven't received a letter within 3-4 weeks, call the CCAC.

Your child is in school.

If required, you will be invited to a planning meeting in the fall to develop an individualized plan for your child. You, or others, may request a meeting at any time, as needed.

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns, call your contact person from the school or another service provider.

THE TRANSITION PROCESS

Families Explore Options	*December*
⇓	
The School Board Gets Enrolment Numbers	*January*
⇓	
Exchange of Information Consents Are Signed	*February*
⇓	
General Information Meeting For Parents	*February/March*
⇓	
School Person May Visit Preschool Program	*April to June*
⇓	
Transition Planning Meeting(s) May Take Place	*Spring or Fall*
⇓	
Your Child Starts School	*September to December*
⇓	
More Specific Goals Are Identified Through Follow Up	

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Planning ahead helps with smooth transition to the school system.
- It is suggested that you start this process in January of the year you are thinking of enrolling your child in school (for September) to help provide lots of time for planning.
- The principal is your first contact at the school. He/she may assign another staff to be your contact within the school.
- Ask about the school's information night for parents.
- Your school contact, family support worker, early intervention worker, or a friend may help you through this transition process and accompany you to meetings.
- Questions to consider and helpful hints in preparing your child for school are available from your school, Early Intervention Program, or Family Resource Centres.
- If you choose to register your child in school, you may wish to get involved in the school council.

Revised March 2004

A.13 Entry Plan for Kindergarten Students With Special Needs

ENTRY PLAN FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS - Rainbow DSB

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	WHEN	HOW
1. Participate in information meeting organized by Child Care Resources	- determination of possible service needs of Kindergarten children entering school - information to agencies re: planning process - determination of school placements required - determination of appropriate consultant - receive information package detailing special needs of each student and release information forms	Special Education Consultant responsible for School Entry	February-March	Child Care Resources gathers information from parents and Day Care centres re: placement desired in Rainbow District School Board Case Manager calls Consultant responsible for entry process to arrange date of meeting
2. Inform Superintendent of Special Education	- determination of staff required for following September	Special Education Consultant responsible for School Entry	February-March	telephone contact or email message
3. Contact consultant and principal of receiving school	- inform consultant and principal of possible placement of student with special needs	Special Education Consultant responsible for School Entry	March	telephone contact or email message
4. Contact parents/guardians	- explain entry process - discuss and clarify information in information package - discuss placement options - arrange visits to schools as desired by parents - public relations	Special Education Consultant responsible for School Entry	March	telephone contact
5. Arrange visit with Day Care	- observe child - discuss existing program with Day Care staff	Consultant	April	telephone contact, visit
6. Arrange Case Conference	- arrange case conference with Child Care Resources, Day Care staff, parents, consultants, principal and other people as required	Special Education Consultant responsible for School Entry	May	telephone contact
7. Case Conference	- share information from Day Care staff to ensure school success - develop an effective entry transition plan, including transportation arrangements, equipment - allow parents to meet school staff - public relations	Consultant	May	Child Care Resources will invite parents and Day Care staff. Consultant responsible for school entry will invite school staff and central staff as required.

A.14 The Welcome Checklist for Elementary Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders

Ottawa-Carleton Catholic DSB
The Welcome Checklist
for Elementary Students Wth
Autism Spectrum Disorders

Creating a Successful Transition to School
2004

Getting to Know Your Student

- Identify a teacher or administrator who will act as the "case manager" or "navigator" who will be the home/school liaison. The teacher/administrator should also be the student's key "Safe Person".
- Identify the role of the "Safe Person" (social skills trainer/social skills interpreter/active listener/calming provider/sensory support teacher, etc.).
- Review the "All About Me" package with the pre-school and with the parents. Develop initial strategies to meet the unique needs (behavioural, academic, and emotional) of the student.
- Schedule dates for an ALL staff awareness session. Plan for early in the school year. Invite the "A" team. (See section: "Staff Awareness.)
- Set dates for student orientation days for your student with ASD. Visits in June and in late August would be most beneficial. (Students with ASD require a more extensive orientation process than typical students.)
- Other

Planning for Your Student Using the Information from the "All About Me" Package

- Begin Transitional I.E.P. Use the "All About Me" Package to develop strategies to address challenges in: Communication/social/behaviour/academic/other.
- KNOW the anxiety triggers and develop strategies to provide calming.
- Identify area (room) that will be the student's "safe place" (resource room/V.P. office/...).
- Develop schedules and timetables.
- Assure regular breaks are included in the timetable.

A.14 *(continued)*

- Develop a "Safety Alert Plan". Use the "All About Me" Package to help develop strategies to address the safety of the student with ASD and the safety of others.
- Take pictures of all relevant staff (teachers/E.T.A's/administrators/counsellors/librarians/secretarial/ cafeteria/custodial).
- Set up a "communication with home" plan.
- Other

Student Orientation

- Provide a map of the school.
- Videotape (digital camera) a walk-through of the school for the student to review at home. (Include key areas in the video: classrooms/library/gym/playground/bathrooms/resource room/office area/etc.).
- Provide pictorial social stories. (See Visual Supports.)
- Have student meet all teachers and relevant personnel. Provide pictures and names of all teachers, educational assistants and "safe person".
- Provide the student with pictures and names of all other relevant personnel (principal, vice-principal, resource teacher, secretary, custodian, etc.).
- Show the student his/her assigned:
  - Seat in the classroom
  - Spot on the carpet for circle time
  - Coat hooks

- Share classroom routines:
  - Transition songs
  - Bathroom routines
  - Line up routines
  - Other

Staff Awareness

- Set date for general awareness session for ALL staff (administrators, teachers, custodial/librarian/secretarial staff).
- Contact the Student Services OCCSB to help in developing awareness session.

The Safe Place

- Personalize the *safe place* to suit the student with:
  - Pictures of special interest
  - Music
  - Sensory items

- Identify when *safe place* will be used:
  - Before school or early morning
  - Following specific classes
  - At the end of the day
  - Extinction
  - Calming
  - Body breaks
  - Redirection
  - Other
- Determine cues to *safe place* base (READ THE SIGNS!).
- Identify activities (calming) that will occur during *safe place* times.
- Other

Sensory Needs

- In consultation with parents and Occupational Therapists determine how sensory needs will be met. (Read the "All About Me" Package to see what has been effective.)
- Obtain resources necessary to meet the sensory needs of the student.
- Create a sensory box.
- Determine where the sensory breaks will occur.
- Schedule frequent sensory breaks throughout the day.
- Other

A.14 *(continued)*

Visual Supports

- Identify which supports are needed:
  - Map of school
  - Daily class schedule
  - Cloak room checklist
  - Toileting
  - OOPS card
  - Stop signs
  - Boundary lines
  - Individual work systems (as necessary)
  - Other

- Identify which social stories are necessary:
  - Going to school
  - Circle time
  - Riding the bus/taxi
  - Photo day
  - Fire drill
  - What "a day in a life" looks like
  - How to follow a visual schedule
  - Calm Down Time
  - Bathroom Time
  - Recess
  - Play Time
  - Other

Changes in Routine

- Inform the student of any changes in typical classroom procedures (assemblies, fire drills, guest speakers, seating changes, supply teacher). USE VISUALS.
- Determine what additional supports the student needs when changes occur.

A.15 Description of the Fair Start Preschool Screening Program, 2004

www.fairstart.ca

Every Child Deserves a Fair Start

In Thunder Bay, a partnership of community agencies and school boards (listed on the side) delivers a comprehensive program of early identification to children in our community, beginning at 18 months.
The 18 month screen is building in popularity and we are finding that about 30% of children entering JK have been previously screened by Fair Start, either through our Child Care initiatives or our community screenings. Early screening information is made available to the school with the consent of the parents.

However, when any child enters JK in any of the three systems in our community, they participate in the JK screening process. Parents are given a Fair Start Preschool Screening Booklet as part of their registration package. Parents are asked to complete the booklet and return it to the school as quickly as possible so that it can be scored by the school and the results returned to the parent. The purpose is to provide any needed intervention as early in a child's life as possible. The Fair Start booklet is produced in English and in French. Developmental areas covered in the booklet include hearing, vision, speech & language, social development, gross and fine motor skills. In addition, there is information provided for parents about helping with transitions, tips from the teacher, healthy snacks, etc.

The Fair Start JK Booklet is not a screening tool as such but rather, is part of the JK Screening process in Thunder Bay. As well as designing the booklet, community partners work together to ensure completion and scoring of the booklet, providing feedback to parents, followup intervention, and ongoing evaluation and modification. This booklet has changed significantly over time and will continue to evolve in response to information collected from all stakeholders.

Partners

- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Lakehead Regional Family Centre
- Communities Together for Children / Ontario Early Years Centre
- Lakehead District School Board
- Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- George Jeffrey Children's Treatment Centre
- Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boreales
- Dilico-Ojibway Child & Family Services
- Ontario Early Years Centre District of Thunder Bay

Training:

- Each year in January, Fair Start committee members from partner agencies provide a half-day training session to all special education teachers in the City of Thunder Bay on the administration and scoring of the booklet.
- Representatives from each partner agency discuss the services their agency can provide to children and answer any questions teachers may have.
- Fair Start participates in an annual training session organized for school secretaries organized by Lakehead Public Schools.
- Fair Start provides annual training to potential special education teachers through Lakehead Public Schools.
- Fair Start participates in all JK information nights to present to parents on the importance of early ID and to provide information on completion of the booklets.
- Fair Start trains retired teacher volunteers to help out at identified schools where parents might have difficulty with the literacy requirements posed by the booklet.

999 Balmoral St., Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6E7 Phone: 625-8817 Fax 628-8664

A.15 *(continued)*

www.fairstart.ca

Every Child Deserves a Fair Start

Evaluation:

- Fair Start's Screening Subcommittee (clinical member from each of the partners, including special education teachers from each Board) meets monthly to review statistics and information on booklet completion and make recommendations to improve. Areas evaluated included:
  - Participation rates
  - Identification rates
  - Followup rates
  - Appropriateness rates
  - Waiting list times
  - Parent satisfaction
  - Teacher feedback

Fair Start's Evaluation Committee meets to consider specific areas. In 2005, they are addressing the effectiveness of Social Development screening both in early Fair Start and in the JK Fair Start booklets.

A key to Fair Start is the interactive web-based database at www.fairstart.ca. It enables teachers and service providers to communicate concerns and outcomes about each child that is identified through the school.

In addition the database enables us to track trends and to make improvements to the program each year to address concerns that are identified in this way.

Fair Start has created a training package that we use to train Special Education staff in the administration of the booklet. Templates of letters to parents are included in the package and are forwarded electronically to schools following the training session so that each school can insert their own letterhead.

Questions can be addressed to Cathy Farrell, Fair Start Program Facilitator 1-807-625-8817 or e-mail info@fairstart.ca.

Partners

- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Lakehead Regional Family Centre
- Communities Together for Children / Ontario Early Years Centre
- Lakehead District School Board
- Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- George Jeffrey Children's Treaunent Centre
- Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boreales
- Dilico-Ojibway Child & Family Services
- Ontario Early Years Centre District of Thunder Bay

999 Balmoral St., Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6E7 Phone: 625-8817 Fax 628-8664

A.16 Junior Kindergarten Enrolments: Students With Special Needs (Sample protocol to assist parents in registering children with special needs)

Junior Kindergarten Enrolments: Students with Special Needs

The Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières works in collaboration with community agencies and the Centre Jules-Léger provincial school to coordinate services.

Students with special needs from other programs, in particular:

- preschool daycare programs;
- preschool programs for deaf students;
- preschool programs dealing with language and speech;
- intensive early intervention programs for children with autism,

are integrated into Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières' schools in accordance with a procedure that has been set up and that complies with our service delivery model, which provides stages of observation and consultation by means of a case study that will ensure that the assessments and interventions necessary for integration into school are carried out.

The following table describes the procedures under this program.

Programs	*Procedures*
• preschool daycare programs	- do a case study with case workers/educators, parents - carry out initial observations to identify needs - review the assessment or, as necessary, plan an assessment (period of 3 to 6 months) - set up the programs and services
• preschool programs for deaf students	- set up the transition plan with the provincial school
• preschool programs dealing with language and speech	- call a transition meeting between staff from the agency and the Conseil's speech therapist
• intensive early intervention programs for children with autism	- do a case study with case workers/educators and parents - carry out preliminary observations, insofar as possible - study the assessments and recommendations - set up the programs and services

The Special Education Programs and Services Department is responsible for the coordination of services.

(Translated from "Inscriptions à la maternelle : élèves ayant des besoins particuliers", by the Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières)

A.17 Early School Transition for Students With Special Needs: A Social Story Book

Early School Transition for Students with Special Needs

A Social Story© Book Used for Transition to Another Classroom or School

Sometimes a student with a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (or any student who has difficulty with transition) has difficulty moving to a new classroom (whether in the same school or a new school). A Social Story© book is a proven strategy in dealing with this issue.

The Social Story© book contains relevant information regarding the new environment. The information can be presented as photographs accompanied by words/sentences (see sample on opposite page) or picture symbols (Picture Communication Symbols from the Boardmaker Programme) accompanied by words/sentences or a video recording. To increase the effectiveness of the Social Story© book, the choice of format must consider the overall needs of the student.

Relevant information may include:

- the name of the school
- the door(s) the student will be using (e.g., to enter the school, for recess, for fire drill, etc.)
- the door to the classroom
- different areas/activities in the classroom that the student may be involved in (e.g., computer, listening centre, the child's desk, etc.)
- the area where students hang their coats, backpacks, etc.
- the bathroom the student will use
- the gymnasium, library, or computer lab
- any classroom into which the student may be integrated
- the hallway, office or playground
- school staff (principal, vice-principal, secretary, custodian, music teacher, etc.)
- classroom staff (teacher, educational assistant)
- objects of interest in the new environment (e.g., water fountains, if the student uses them a lot)
- mode of transportation, if known (e.g., bus, taxi, Mom's car, walking with sibling, etc.)

The pictures are then placed in the booklet format with accompanying sentences, written at the level of understanding for that particular child. The sentences should be written in the first person, e.g., I am going to a new school in September.

The book is read by the child or read to the child, whatever is the most appropriate. The book should be sent home over the summer. The parents are encouraged to review the book periodically with their child.

If the student is going to a new school in September, it is also suggested that the parents introduce their child to the school environment, e.g., drive by the school, walk around the school yard, play on the playground equipment. If possible, it is also a good idea for the parents and their child to visit the classroom that the child will be in next year. See Pages ...

A.17 *(continued)*

My school is called Hagersville Elementary School. This is a picture of my school.

Hagersville Elementary School is a place where I learn with other children. Children learn while they work and play.

Appendix B: Current Environment

Ministry of Education data indicate that approximately 245 000 students attended Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten in Ontario in 2003-2004.

In 2002, approximately half of school boards in Ontario had written policies in place that addressed entry-to-school planning, primarily for children with special needs. Most of the remaining school boards followed informal procedures, with many school boards indicating a desire to move to a more formal protocol. However, stakeholders remained concerned about the inconsistency in planning for entry to school and the possibility that children were entering school without adequate preparation.

Various environmental factors affect planning for entry to school, including the numbers of children coming to school, the composition of their family unit, and their level of literacy.

School entry is generally easier for next-borns and their families, as they already have some experience of school before they begin. According to data from Statistics Canada's 2001 census, Ontario is home to more than 2 million families. More than half of those have two or more children: 41 per cent have one child at home; 40 per cent have two children at home; and more than 18 per cent include three or more children at home.

Society is becoming increasingly knowledge-based, causing economic and social shifts, as well as changes in the nature of childhood and the family unit. Around the world, children no longer spend the first five years of their lives at home with their mothers.

In Ontario, the majority of preschool children (more than 70 per cent) live in either two-parent families where both parents work or single-parent families where the single parent works. In many countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), children are increasingly growing up in lone-parent households. As a result, more and more children spend a greater part of their early childhood in out-of-home settings – often in multiple settings with multiple caregivers.

Ontario society is also characterized by increasing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, a factor that can affect how children function in the language of the classroom and their development of literacy and numeracy skills.

Nonetheless, the quality of parental interaction with children in the early years remains a key factor in their performance. Studies show a strong link between children's readiness to learn and their parents' engagement in literacy acquisition (McCain and Mustard, 1999).

Literacy and numeracy are among the principal components of school readiness. Evidence shows that children with poor verbal and literacy skills at school entry tend not to do well in the school system, and it is difficult to improve their outcomes later on. Developmentally, there is only a narrow window of opportunity for a child to cultivate a high level of literacy. By the age of eight, children who have not learned fundamental literacy can be expected to struggle throughout the rest of their schooling and consequently face an increased risk of dropping out of school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004).

Appendix C: Research Findings

Overview

The examples in this guide draw on a wide range of current research published between 1990 and 2004. This includes studies, surveys, reports, literature reviews, procedural reviews, and analyses conducted across Ontario, Canada, the United States, Australia, and in other OECD countries. The research is supported by examples of approaches and effective practices currently in use in several different school boards across Ontario.

Much of the research focuses on planning school entry for children with special needs, based on long experience in planning their entry into Kindergarten, and can be generalized to all children.

Research commissioned by the Ministry of Education has highlighted the guiding principles that support effective planning for school entry and identified the key features of effective planning discussed in this document. In addition, these and other research findings:

- underline the importance of planning for school entry;
- demonstrate that the timing of school entry is critical in early childhood development;
- stress the need to build bridges from preschool settings to the school setting.

The Importance of Planning for Entry to School

Positive early experiences with school are of paramount importance to young children, who arrive at school with different backgrounds and experiences, at different stages of development, and with different needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998).

Entry to school can be a significant culture shift for children. It often implies a change from play-based, developmentally appropriate practice to more academically related requirements that may bring additional challenges (Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, and Holburn, 1990).

Such change can be confusing and anxiety-producing for the child and family (Fowler and Ostrosky, 1994). Changes are "times of vulnerability", especially for children with special needs and their families (Rice and O'Brien, 1990). However, young children's positive experiences in different settings, such as family, peer group, preschool, and school, will contribute to their successful entry to school (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 1999).

It is important to create mechanisms and practices to sustain and build on those positive experiences, especially of competence. Children who receive additional environmental support as they move into and through Kindergarten and the early elementary grades perform better in school – for example, in reading and mathematics (Ramey and Ramey, 1998).

Starting school is not just an experience for the individual child. Rather, it is a community experience, involving a wide range of people (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 1999). That experience involves not only how children adjust to school but also how families and the school interact and collaborate. Indeed, starting school is a significant "family milestone" for parents and other family members as well as children (Rosenkoetter and Rosenkoetter, 1993). School entry has a major impact on family routines and relationships.

Most families view entry to school as a positive experience. They are optimistic about their child's upcoming entry to school and feel the child is ready for new challenges and more exposure to academic activities (Rosenkoetter and Rosenkoetter, 1993). That creates a positive climate for change that supports the child and the family through the school-entry process and is reinforced in the community, where the child's peers and their families are embarking on the same change.

Critical Timing

Children's early learning experiences have a profound effect on their development and school readiness – that is, their ability to meet the task demands of school (such as sitting quietly) and to assimilate the curriculum content at the time of entry into the formal school system (Kagan, 1992).

New evidence has shown that development from the prenatal period to age six is rapid and dramatic and shapes long-term outcomes (First Ministers' Meeting Communiqué on Early Childhood Development, September 11, 2000). Opportunities for a child to learn by solving problems through play drive the development of multiple sensing pathways in the brain. There are critical periods when a young child requires appropriate stimulation for the brain to establish the neural pathways needed for optimum development. During these early critical periods, children are developing binocular vision, emotional control, habitual ways of responding, language and literacy, and a beginning understanding of symbols and relative quantity. Many of these critical periods are over or waning by the time a child is six years old (McCain and Mustard, 1999).

Scientists believe that children are especially primed for acquiring language and language skills between nine months and five years of age. This "critical period" begins to wane between ages five and seven. A person's fluency and vocabulary can continue to improve after age seven in languages that the individual has already started to learn. However, if learning a second language does not begin until around puberty, eventual fluency will be much less than it would have been had the learning started earlier (Doherty, 1997).

In Kindergarten, children's receptivity to new influences and capacity to learn are at their peak. During this period, they acquire a variety of important skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will affect their ability to learn, their personal development, their relationships with others, and their future participation in society (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998).

Building Bridges From One Developmental Stage to Another

Ideally, early child development programs and the school system should be part of a continuum for children that extends from the early years through to adulthood (McCain and Mustard, 1999). There is a long way to go to develop the systemic bridges that can support that goal.

Faculties of education train teachers, and colleges of applied arts and technology programs train early childhood educators. McCain and Mustard (1999) recommend that these institutions develop articulation agreements and programs for training in early child development that bridge both professional worlds. Although some institutions have such agreements in place, there is more work to be done in this area. That could help the 10 per cent of children in Ontario in regulated daycare settings. The next challenge is to reach out to unregulated care situations (McCain and Mustard, 1999).

Rosenkoetter (1995) suggests that the goal of planning for school entry should be to create as much continuity as possible for young children entering Kindergarten by developing a partnership among families, schools, and communities that is aimed at facilitating the transition from preschool to Kindergarten.

Kagan (1999) describes continuity as a principle involving three aspects: philosophy, pedagogy, and structure. Effective school-entry strategies aim to build greater congruence among the beliefs and values underlying educational practice, between the curriculum content and the instruction process, and among the broad system/legislative issues that shape services, such as policies, regulations, and funding (Kagan, 1991).

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Additional Information From Websites

Most Ontario school boards have their own website. These can be accessed through the Ontario Ministry of Education's website at http://sbinfo.edu.gov.on.ca/.

The links to each province and territory's education website can be found at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/relsites/oth_prov.html.

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